(c) whether Government are also thinking of extending any excise concessions to the sugar industry; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) and (b) It has been decided that neutralization of ocean freight disadvantage would be reimbursed to sugar factories at the rate of Rs. 350 per tonne.

(c) and (d) No specific information relating to concessions can be provided.

Procurement by FCI in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

228. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of paddy purchased by the Food Corporation of India in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh during the current year; and

(b) whether any agency other than the Food Corporation of India is also purchasing paddy in both the States and if so, the minimum support price received by the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) and (b) In Madhya Pradesh, paddy is procured both by FCI and State agencies while in chhattisgarh paddy is procured under the decentralized procurement scheme by the State agencies only. During the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 as on 14.2.2003 in Madhya Pradesh, a quantity of 988 MT of paddy has been procured by the FCI and 89,674 MT of paddy has been procured by the State agencies. In Chhattisgarh, the State agencies have procured 13,31,159 MT of paddy upto 14.2.2003.

In Madhya Pradesh, besides the FCI, the State Government/its agencies. *i.e.* Primary Agricultural Credit Societies are undertaking procurement of paddy at MSP declared by Government *viz.* Rs. 530 per quintal for Common and Rs. 560 per quintal for Grade 'A' paddy. Besides a special drought relief price of Rs. 20 per quintal on paddy over and

above the MSP is also being paid to farmers. Similarly in Chhattisgarh the State Government/its agencies *i.e.* State Cooperative Societies are undertaking procurement of paddy under decentralized procurement scheme at MSP. Instructions have been issued to the FCI to ensure that necessary proof/documents are obtained from the millers at the time of procurement to the effect that the benefit of MSP/special drought relief price has been passed on to the farmers.

Development of NER

†229. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have worked out any ambitious plan for the social-economic development of North Eastern Region;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that many pockets of the North Eastern Region have been lagging behind as far as development is concerned, because of having no direct links with national highways; and

(d) if so, the steps Government are taking in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) and (b) Each state of the North Eastern Region pursues its development through its Five Year Plans and Annual Plans. In order to boost the development in the North Eastern Region, the Union Government has taken up various initiatives in the recent past.

East Union Ministry/Department (except those specifically exempted) is required to spend at least 10% of its Gross Budgetary Support for the specific programmes in the North East. The unspent amount with respect to 10% norm is pooled in a Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources. Besides, the North Eastern Council (NEC) was setup with the objective of securing a balanced development of the North Eastern Region, which prepares its Five Year Plans in consultation with the State Governments and the Planning Commission. The NEC attempts to formulate a unified and coordinated regional plan in regard to matters of common interest. In

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.